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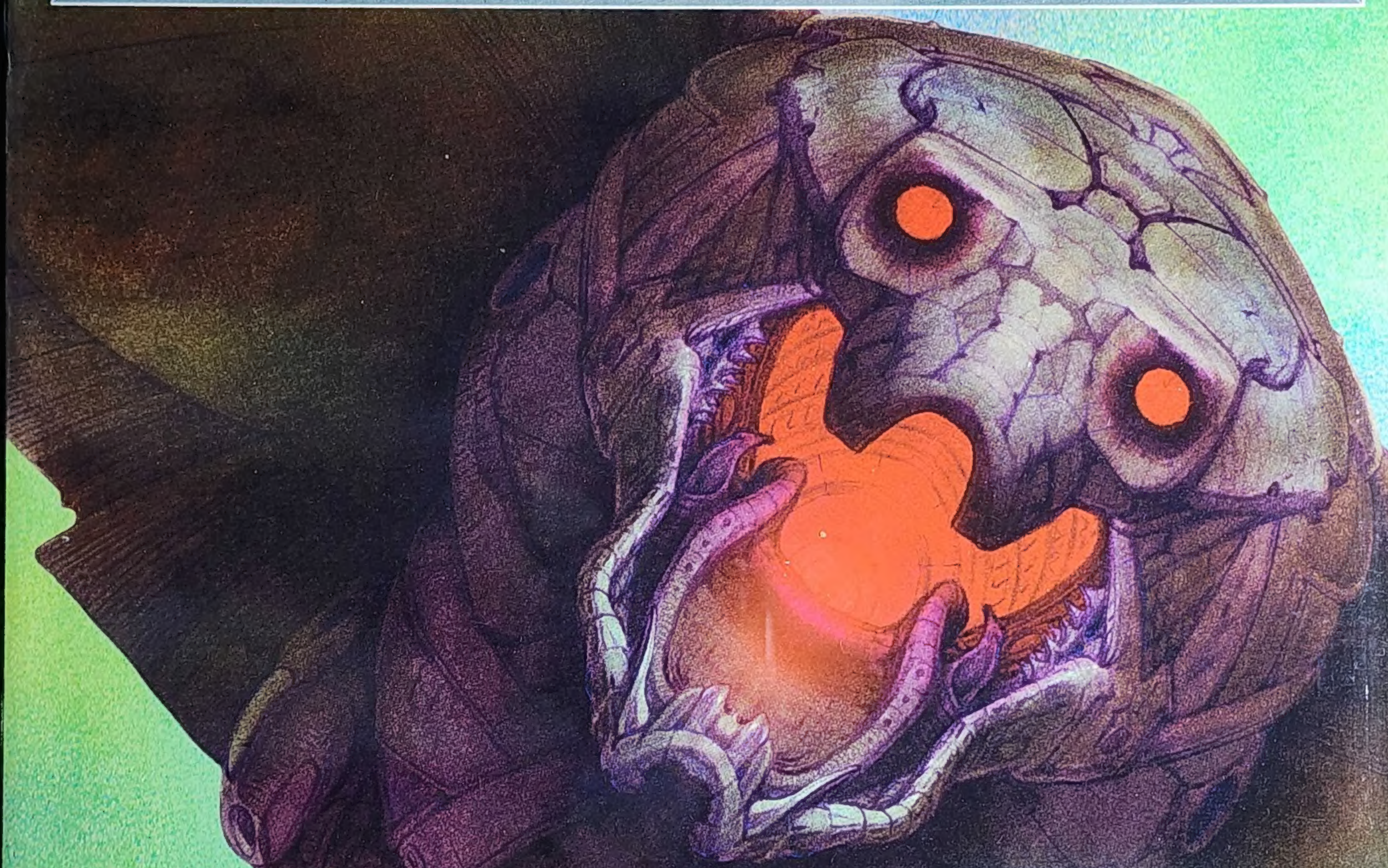
The Ancestral Trail

CYBER CHALLENGE IN THE NEXT DIMENSION



40 Kentar, Cyber Demon

Fight to the finish in the cyber skies

Julek Heller

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In the fortieth sector

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Computer graphics produced by Mehau Kulyk

Flames jetted out from the base of the building as portions of its external facade were discarded and the transformation from tower into rocket was completed. Inside, Richard and Robo found themselves pressed against the floor of the violently-shaking building by the strength of the gravitational forces working against them.

"Robo," cried Richard, who was having difficulty speaking, "what's happening?"

"Removing Omni piece has activated tower's protection devices. Now leaving atmosphere of Cyber Tank Dimension."

"Can't you do anything to stop it?" Richard croaked.

JETTISONED

The sound of Robo's sensors could scarcely be heard above the din of the rocket's engines. "Searching for emergency exit," the robot said.

Robo moved slowly towards the helpless form of his companion. "Preparing to erect force field around Chosen One," he said.

Suddenly, there was a small explosion. Richard looked on in amazement as a hidden doorway in the side of the rocket swung open. The air around him trilled as it was sucked out into space.

Robo had somehow managed to locate an invisible exit. Using his heat ray, he had triggered the opening.

"Well done, Robo!" Richard gasped.

There was a buzzing sound that Richard recognized instantly. Robo's force field stretched out around them. The bubble-shaped translucent film of energy enveloped the two of them. It provided much-needed protection from the vacuum of space that beckoned unwelcomingly.

Robo guided the life-saving bubble through the opening and into freedom. From his vantage point high in the heavens, Richard marvelled that the Cyber Dimension resembled a patchwork quilt of different colours, textures and patterns. He looked on in wonder.

Like a feather floating on a summer's breeze, Richard and Robo drifted through the cold cyber air currents. Outside the safety of the force field erected by the robot, the rocket hurtled off into the inky darkness.

THE HEAVENS ALIGHT

As the flying cylinder receded into the distance, Richard noticed that a dazzling, multi-coloured tail had appeared at its rear. The geyser of burning gases stretched out for a long way, giving the rocket the appearance of a small comet. Without warning, it exploded in a cavalcade of bright, dancing lights.

Richard raised his hand to shield his eyes so that he might savour the beauty of the fiery display. Once again, he reflected soberly, they had escaped death and destruction by a mere hair's breadth.

"Rocket heat shield was not strong enough to survive exit from cyber atmosphere," Robo's voice piped up. "Friction caused rocket to burn up."

Richard watched the last fading embers of the explosion melt away to become lost in the pincushion of stars that hung over the cyber skies.

Robo's voice penetrated the eerie silence. "Unable to sustain force field indefinitely," he advised. "Imperative we locate landing place."

Richard swivelled his head and studied the surroundings. As he watched, the desolate blackness that had threatened to suck them into infinity was slowly replaced by a more welcoming glaze of warm indigo sky.

Hanging gracefully in the blue sheen were a number of powdery, white clouds. There was nothing unusual about the clouds. Although Richard could not put a name to them, their shapes were familiar to him. He could even vaguely remember being taught about them in school science lessons. There was, however, one feature of the swirling fluff-balls of vaporized liquid that caused Richard to raise an eyebrow. Nestling comfortably in the middle of one of the largest was a city.

"Changing course for Cloud City," Robo said before Richard had time to take in the new spectacle. "Energy reserves running low. Must recharge power units."

Richard's eyes scanned the city as the spherical force field was guided towards it.

He could sense danger.

The protective bubble of energy landed gently and dissolved away as Robo turned off the power. Richard found himself standing ankle deep in the clouds. The fear that he might simply drop through them and plummet like a stone down to the ground was quickly replaced by the uncomfortable realization that he was drenched from head to toe in water.

Molo attack

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, as he felt moisture dribble down the back of his neck and under his collar.

Richard was not the only one who was looking vexed. Robo was also covered in water. The little robot's metallic shell glistened in the cyber daylight.

"Must proceed directly to Cloud City," he urged. "If Robo stays in clouds for too long there is danger of oxidization."

"Do you mean that you'll go rusty?" Richard asked.

"Affirmative," Robo said, his torso dripping with moisture.

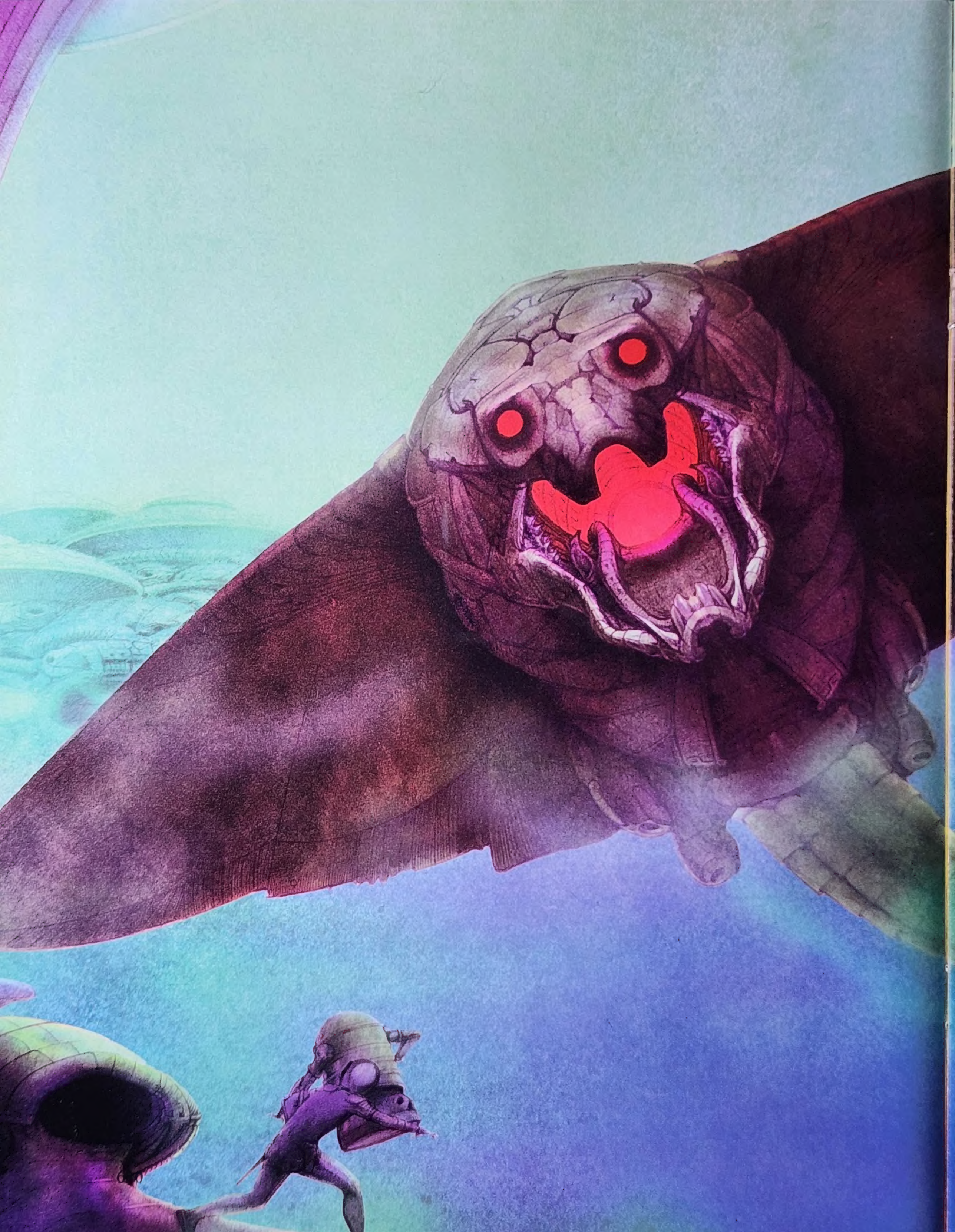
The pair set off towards the city. Walking in the cloud matter was difficult. The watery substance had the consistency of melted treacle. After a short time, Richard began to feel tired, but he struggled on until he finally felt his feet come to rest on hard ground.

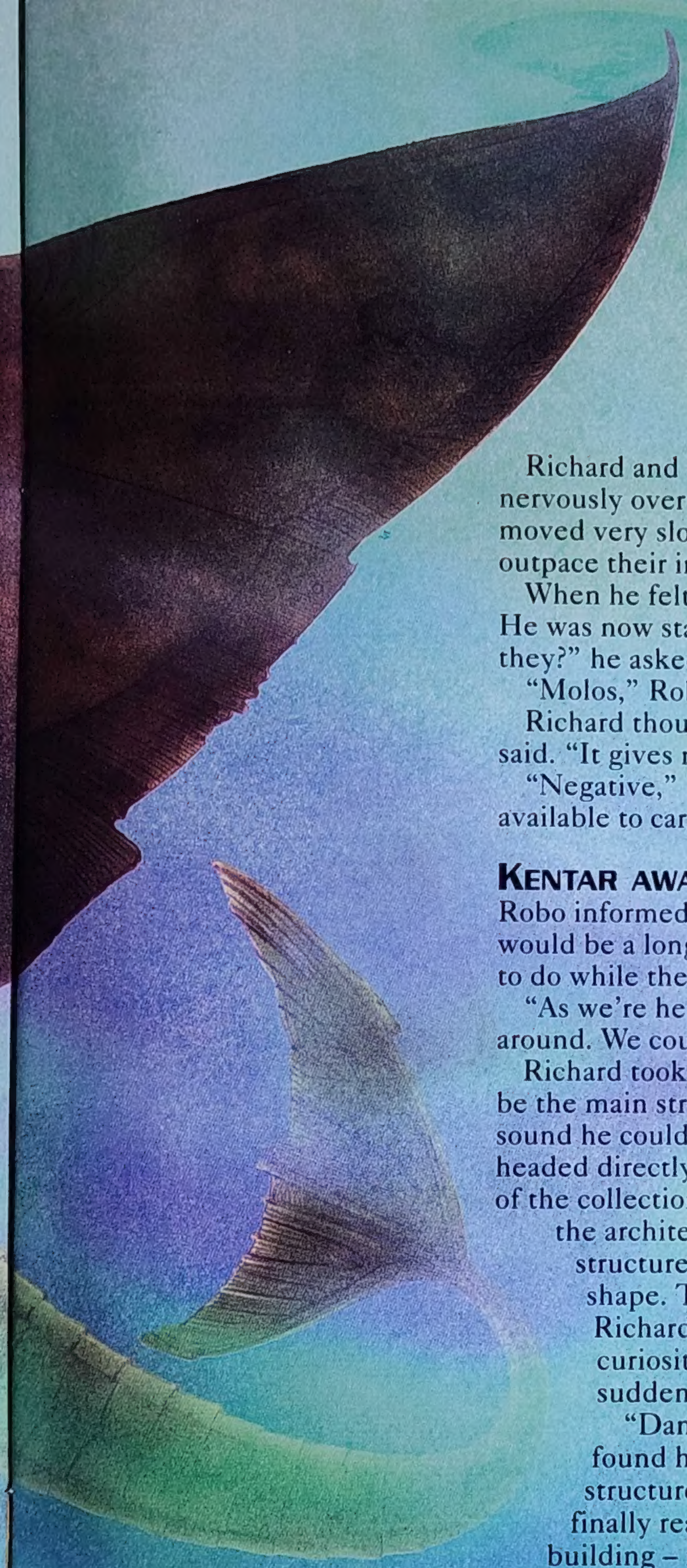
"Have arrived at Cloud City," the voice of Robo announced.

Richard noticed that a new message had appeared on his companion's binary panel. His eyes busily studied the rows of binary digits and took in their meaning.

Without warning, a strange whistling noise could be heard nearby. It reminded Richard of the sound that a kettle makes when it is boiling. As he turned to face the source of the sound, a group of bizarre-looking creatures drifted into view. Before Richard had time to get a clear look at them, one of the newcomers fired something in his direction.

There was a loud bang as a blazing shaft of light struck the ground near to Richard. "Run!" he shouted, as further explosions could be heard around him.





Richard and Robo sped away from their attackers. Peering nervously over his shoulder as he ran, Richard saw that they moved very slowly. It was not difficult for the two of them to outpace their inhuman pursuers.

When he felt that it was safe to do so, Richard came to a halt. He was now standing at the centre of Cloud City. "What were they?" he asked breathlessly.

"Molos," Robo replied, "guardians of the Cloud City."

Richard thought for a moment. "Let's get out of here," he said. "It gives me the creeps."

"Negative," Robo replied. "Insufficient power reserves available to carry Chosen One to surface of Cyber Dimension."

KENTAR AWAKENS

Robo informed Richard that recharging his power supply would be a long process. It was left for Richard to decide what to do while they waited.

"As we're here," he finally said, "we might as well look around. We could find something useful."

Richard took a few careful steps into what he thought must be the main street of the city. It appeared deserted. The only sound he could hear was the whistling of the cyber breezes. He headed directly towards what he considered the most striking of the collection of weird and wonderful buildings designed by the architects of Cloud City, whoever they were. The structure which interested him most was rounded in shape. There was an organic quality about it that Richard found strangely alluring. However, his curiosity was replaced with concern when the building suddenly started to move.

"Danger! Danger!" Robo's voice rang out as Richard found himself unable to drag his eyes away from the structure. His mouth gaped open in astonishment as he finally realized what he was looking at. That was no building – it was a living creature.

"Robo, it's huge!" Richard spluttered. "Quick, run back to where we landed!"

Richard charged away as fast as his legs could carry him. As he did so, he took another look at the monster. Its metallic torso was bigger than a blue whale. A cavernous mouth filled with jagged teeth could comfortably have accommodated a whole symphony orchestra.

Even as he fled, Richard instinctively knew that there was no way they could outpace the gigantic brute.

IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Without warning, a wailing sound came from the beast that almost burst Richard's ear-drums. He could smell its oily breath on his back.

All of a sudden, there was darkness.

Richard stumbled about blindly. "Robo," he yelled, "can you hear me?"

"Affirmative," came a high-pitched voice from nearby.

"Where are we?" Richard asked.

"Inside stomach of Kentar."

"Are you telling me we've been swallowed by that thing?"

"Affirmative," said the robot. As the words left his digital speakers, the cold darkness disappeared. Instead, a stream of red and yellow light lit up the interior of

Kentar's stomach. "Have located internal light switch," Robo announced, his metal hand pointing towards a small panel set in one of the walls of the enormous structure.

Richard was startled by the sheer size of Kentar's stomach. It was so big that it was impossible to see from one end to the other. He was also amazed when he saw what it contained. The stomach appeared to be some kind of ships' graveyard. Derelict and abandoned vessels of all shapes and sizes could be seen amid piles of rubble.

Some of the vessels looked like old-fashioned Spanish galleons, others resembled modern warships. There were flying saucers, planes and all sorts of strange-looking craft. There was no sign of their crews.

"What is Kentar?" an awe-struck Richard asked his companion.

"Kentar is robotic creation of Evil One."

Richard thought for a moment. "We're going to have to get out of here," he said. "Let's take a look around and see what we can find."

Richard lost track of time as he explored the graveyard. He was surprised by the wide and varied assortment of abandoned vessels. He grimly wondered what had happened to their crews.

Exciting discovery

Most of the ships looked as if they had been taken completely unawares when they had been swallowed by Kentar. Inside one of the craft, Richard discovered a dining table still laid with knives, forks, plates and uneaten food. It was as if someone had been in the middle of dinner only to find that it was they themselves who were the meal.

While he was leaving one of the Spanish galleons, Richard noticed something familiar sitting in the midst of the rubble. "Robo, look!" he cried.

Richard rushed over to inspect his discovery. It was a cyber cruiser. Although it was similar to the one they had left hanging in the electric web, there were distinct differences in design. This one was slightly bigger and possessed superior weaponry. Richard ached to try it out.

"Cyber Cruiser Version 3.11," Robo said airily. "Equipped with neutron lasers, cloaking device and silicon alloy shields."

Richard had no idea what the robot was talking about, but he could not help being impressed. "Do you think it works?" he asked excitedly.

Robo scanned the sleek craft. "Cyber cruiser appears to be operational."

Richard climbed aboard and perused the controls. Apart from a couple of extra buttons and dials, they were identical to those of the other cruiser. Tentatively, he started the machine up. It took a few moments for it to chug into life. Then, all at once, Richard was airborne.

Even though he was trapped inside the stomach of an enormous metallic sea serpent, Richard was enjoying himself. The new cyber cruiser was far superior to the one that had served him in the past. Gaining altitude until he was almost touching the roof of Kentar's stomach, Richard swept over the abandoned ships.

Combined forces

After his recent experience with the cyber tank, he was wary of touching any of the new controls until he had worked out what they were for. He did not want to launch any more missiles!

After a while, Richard rejoined Robo, landing gently beside the watching robot.

"Wow!" he exclaimed. "This is some machine!" As he spoke, his eyes again focused on his companion's binary panel. He studied the coded words once more. Then it came to him. At last, he knew what they were telling him to do.

"Robo, we must combine our power and focus it on the weakest spot that we can find," he explained.

Robo's sensors clicked into action and he carefully searched the length of Kentar's cavernous interior. Finally, he found what he was looking for. "Kentar weakness located," he announced. "We must proceed to other end of stomach."

With Robo perched behind him, Richard guided the new cyber cruiser in the direction that the robot had indicated. The speedy cyber cruiser ensured that it was not long before they had reached their destination.

When they eventually landed, Richard noticed that they were very close to what appeared to be a small circular doorway in their captor's stomach lining.

"This is the place," announced Robo. "Chosen One must fire cyber cruiser's neutron lasers at opening. Robo will apply heat ray." Richard stared at the cruiser's control panel. Now would be as good a time as any to see what the extra buttons and dials were for.

As Robo's heat ray traced a path along the length of the doorway, Richard set the cyber cruiser's powerful arsenal of weapons into motion. Sizzling noises could be heard as the flying machine's neutron lasers blasted into the aperture. Black smoke gushed into the air. The vast metal wall groaned under the strain of the attack.

THROWN CLEAR

"Increase neutron laser attack," Robo commanded. It was clear the robot was still not operating at full power. His voice sounded thin and weak.

Richard was just about ready to give up when, all at once, there was a loud explosion. "Terminate attack," Robo advised. They waited for the smoke to clear. When it did, there was no doubt that their onslaught had reaped dividends.

The doorway in Kentar's stomach lining had widened. Its edges glowed red in the half-light to reveal a gaping hole, through which daylight could be seen.

Unfortunately, their handiwork had not gone unnoticed by their host. An earth-shaking roar of pain made the ships' graveyard shudder. The cyber cruiser was buffeted around helplessly as Kentar inhaled enormous draughts of air in an attempt to cool his burning stomach.

All of a sudden, there was a noise like the blowing of a thousand trumpets. A huge gust of air came from Kentar, sending the cyber cruiser spinning out of control.

"It's coughing us out," cried Richard, unable to contain his relief.

His belief was confirmed when he saw that the jaws of the great creature were opening wide. Another blast of wind sent the flying machine looping through the air to freedom. They had escaped!

The danger was not yet over. The force of Kentar's exertions was enough to set the buildings in Cloud City rocking in their delicate foundations. "Warning! Warning!" Robo's shrill voice rang out. "Kentar has created air vortex!"

Richard struggled in vain to control the cyber cruiser, but it was ensnared by the huge funnel of air. Round and round it went as the speed of the vortex quickened. Although he felt increasingly dizzy, Richard was still able to watch the mighty spectacle of Cloud City falling to pieces. Shards of buckled metal were joined by slabs of shattered mortar as they were swept away by the swirling winds. Soon the once-impressive streets of the city in the sky were reduced to piles of smoking rubble.

Richard and Robo, were more fortunate. The raging hurricane carried the two of them away to safety. When the power of the vortex finally began to diminish, the angry form of Kentar was but a small dot in the distance.

Richard took a look around at where the winds had brought them. He did not like what he saw.

An orange sky hung heavy with the smell of ozone. Creamy yellow smoke obscured whatever lay below. Richard eyes darted around him, seeking a place to land the cyber cruiser. "Where are we?" he asked his companion.

"Cannot answer question," replied Robo. "Insufficient data available."

Guided terror

Richard guided the flying machine through the curtain of clouds and vainly attempted to locate a landing place. "It's no good," he said. "I can't see a thing through this smoke."

Then something caught his attention. It was several moments before he realized what he was seeing. He blinked, in the hope that his discovery was merely a trick of the light. "Missiles!" he exclaimed. "There are missiles heading directly for us!"

Robo's sensors swept over the surrounding area. "Affirmative," he finally agreed. "Guided missiles tracking cyber cruiser. Danger! Evacuate area immediately!"

SHOOMI'S SANCTUARY

Enter into the Cyber Dimension and engage optical recognition to find...

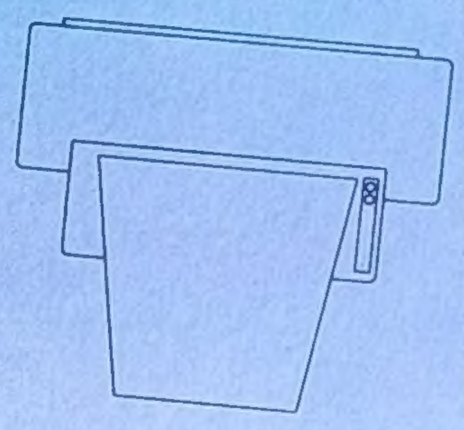
▶ Shoomi and Shoobi

Richard and Robo's twin shadows are still keeping up with our heroes' every step. Study the illustrations in this issue and see if you can uncover Shoomi and Shoobi in under three minutes.

In issue 39 Shoomi and Shoobi were on page 608.

▶ Computer Challenge

Hidden somewhere in this issue is a vitally important computer component from the sinister Cyber Dimension. Use your visual skills to help Richard and his friend Robo locate it in less than three minutes.
When you have discovered the component's hiding place, can you guess what it is and what its function might be?



In issue 39 a portable hand scanner was hidden on page 620. Hand scanners are used to scan images or text into digital format. The digital information can then be used by computer programs. Hand scanners are used by designers and writers. A scanned image can easily be re-touched or altered. Pages of text can be scanned in and converted to popular word processing formats. This procedure is called OCR (Optical Character Recognition).

▶ Competition Details

When you have collected 26 letter blocks, you will be given a clue which will help you form them into a sentence that reveals the fatal flaw in the Cyber Dimension. The prize for the competition is a super Sega Mega Drive, complete with a copy of the great new role-playing game Shining Force.
Details on how to enter the competition will be given in a later issue.
NB The competition will be open to residents of the UK and Eire only.

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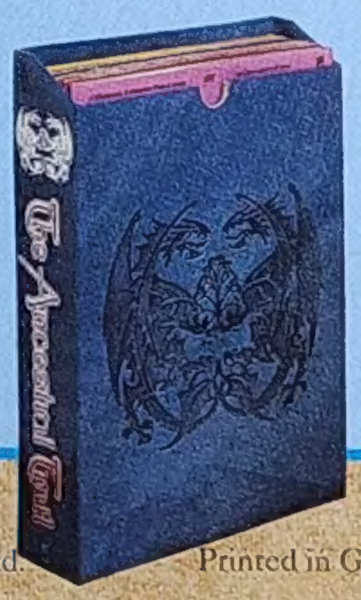

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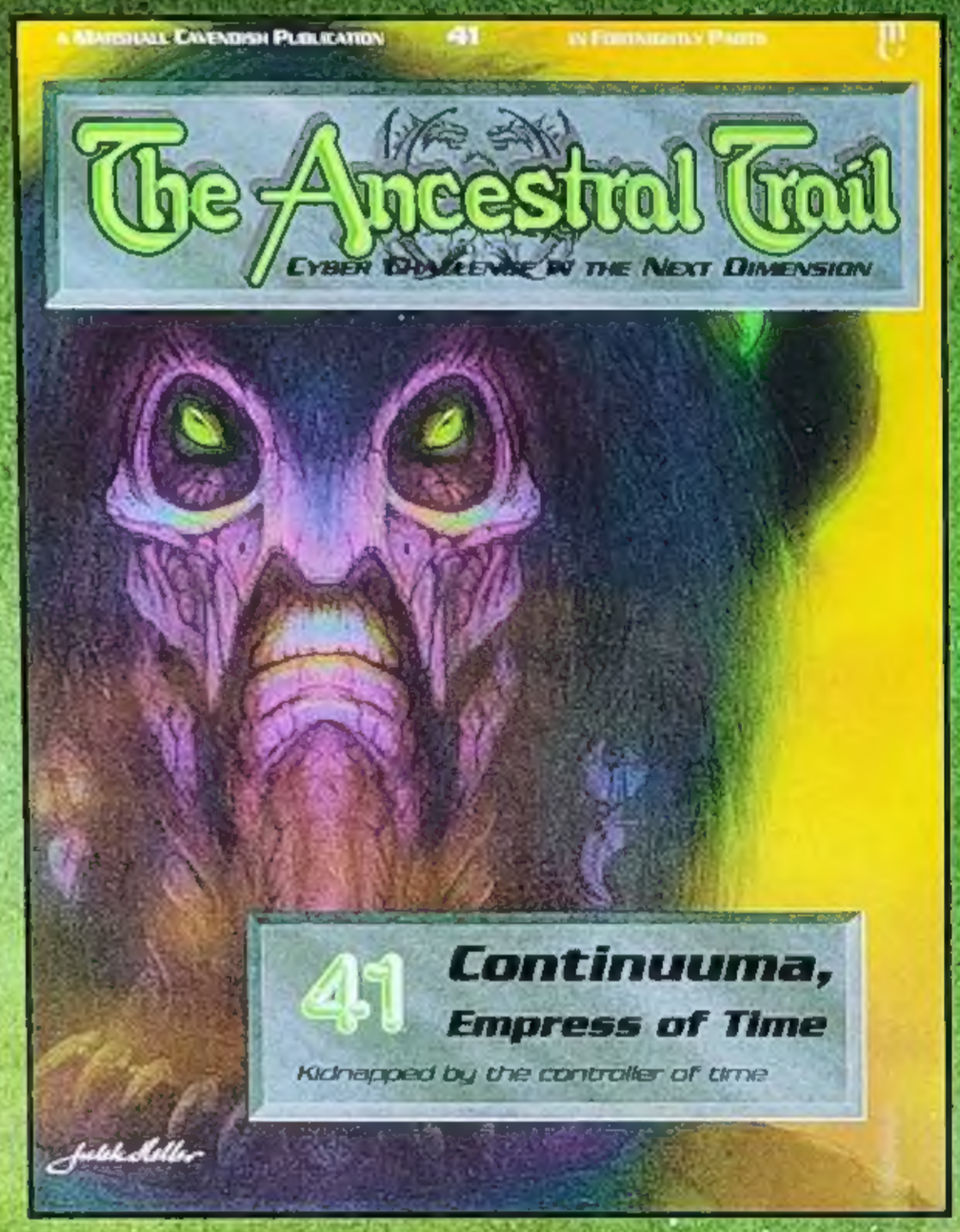

In Issue 41

Continuuma,
Empress of Time

Richard is lost in history as he comes under attack from an evil time controller. Can he get back to the present and vanquish his foe?

plus

- ▶ More Techscan cards
- ▶ 2 more Cyber Power cards
- ▶ More Cyber Chess pieces

Coming in Issue 42

Tyrannix, Robo-Dinosaur

Richard enters a primordial cyber jungle and finds himself under attack from killer plants and savage mechanical dinosaurs.

plus

2 more **Techscan** cards ▶ More **Cyber Power** cards
▶ More **Cyber Chess** playing pieces.

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